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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WICHITA/SEDGWICK COUNTY INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN TASK FORCE RECEIVES \$393,294 FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WICHITA, Kan. -- United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced today that **the United States Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program awarded \$393,294** on June 30, 2003, to the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department in continuing funding for the Wichita/Sedgwick County Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, a part of the Exploited and Missing Child Unit.

The Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program was developed by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 1998 to assist state and local law enforcement agencies to acquire the necessary knowledge, equipment, and personnel resources to prevent, interdict, and investigate ICAC offenses. Currently there are thirty-six ICAC Task Forces across the country including the Wichita/Sedgwick County Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force.

These funds will be used by the Wichita/Sedgwick County Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force to conduct ICAC investigations; develop a prevention education program; establish a case management system; and acquire specialized training and equipment.

The Wichita/Sedgwick County Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force has been in existence for approximately three years and conducts online internet investigations into child pornography and investigations into predators attempting to meet children over the internet. The unit also includes a forensic computer section which is used to examine computers for evidence of a crime.

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An example of the investigations conducted by the Wichita/Sedgwick County Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force and prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's office in Wichita, Kansas, is the conviction and sentencing of **Charles D. Marino, Jr.**, 41, from Newport, North Carolina, who was sentenced on February 14, 2003, to thirty-three months in federal prison, without parole, to be followed by three years of supervised release for traveling in interstate commerce, from North Carolina to Wichita, to engage in sex acts with a girl he believed to be 13 years old that he met in an internet chat room. Marino actually contacted an undercover officer with the Wichita/Sedgwick County Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force who was monitoring the chat room.

“As children and teenagers use the internet in increasing number, the threat from predators searching for unsupervised contact with under-aged victims and the proliferation of child pornography present a significant threat to the children of Kansas,” Melgren said. “That is why the Wichita/Sedgwick County Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force is so important in the continuing fight to protect our children.”